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ABSTRACT

A shortage of instructional materials and activities is a continual problem for Native language courses, as is making the material relevant to students. The Native way of teaching and learning has always been to have fun. In response to these concerns, a group of language experts at Trent University (Ontario) are developing a CD-ROM for high school students about hockey in Ojibway. In Canada, most aboriginal communities have arenas, and hockey is important to many Ojibway youth. Perhaps they will use the language while playing hockey as a code to win. Words and phrases related to hockey were sorted into themes and organized into a medicine wheel format. The medicine wheel is a circle that has four quadrants, such as the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. From this medicine wheel came the idea of nurturing the language and healing the culture. Thirteen themes were identified, and they were expanded through the use of subthemes. Scripts were written to match the themes and what might actually happen at a typical hockey game. Aboriginal input was sought from the start in recognition of the fact that aboriginal communities need to control and review what is taught to their children. Four Ojibway language experts supervised all aspects of the project. New words had to be created for items that had no equivalent in the old language, such as time clocks. Completed scripts will be reviewed by fluent speakers from the community. (TD)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Ojibway Hockey CD ROM in the Making

Shirley I. Williams

The Revitalization of Nishinaabe Language Project at Trent University began two years ago. The Project develops materials for Ojibway and Odawa language speakers, students, and new learners. It has been a hub of continuous activity for creating language materials and has led to the creation of a web site.

For many years now, Nishinaabe language teachers have been crying for language materials. In the past, Native language teachers have had major concerns with the lack of materials available, the lack of funding opportunities available to them, and the need for an increase in the number of trained language teachers. Every teacher who has taught language has run into the same problem, which, of course, is the availability of Native language materials and activities for their students. This need for materials was the basis for beginning this project.

The project started two years ago, and it is now in the final stages of revising the language texts as well as developing the accompanying materials for the spoken texts. The texts I am referring to are entitled: *Eshkintam Nishinaabemang Mzinagan*—Introduction to Ojibway; *Eko-nizhing Nishinaabemang*—Intermediate level; *Oshime Geyaabe Nishinabemang*—More Advance Ojibway language; and *Gdi-nweninaa*--Our Voice, Our Sound, formerly called Lexicon Dictionary.

The content of the last book, *Gdi-nweninaa*, is organized into themes. Some of these themes were extracted and became the foundations for the other texts. *Gdi-nweninaa* contains five chapters, and the fifth chapter became the base from which we are creating the CD ROM. Chapter five consists of recreational themes; it is from this theme that the vision for designing a CD-ROM about hockey came.

The project as a whole does not consist of the CD only; it also concerns many other facets of language development. There are crossword puzzles, anagrams, word searches, and much more, all of which relate to the first text, *Eshkintam Nishinaabemang Mzinagan*. This idea came as a result of Native language students not having any activities to enhance their language learning. The crossword puzzles have almost been completed.

Another learning tool nearing completion is that of flash cards. Future plans consist of, but are not limited to, making cassettes to accompany the three texts. However, this workshop will focus on the development of the CD-ROM.

The CD ROM

In September 1998, a group of Ojibway language experts, consisting of language teachers, fluent speakers, technicians from Trent University, students, and other invited guests were called to the Native Studies Department. This small group of people gathered to discuss a number of topics. The key question that we explored was "What can be done in order to create Ojibway language materials?" The theme for the project was evolving. The large group was then divided into four smaller groups, and each was given a choice of theme from which to develop a lesson.

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As a result of this brainstorming session, the idea for developing a CD-ROM on sports was born. One key question raised was "What group is the project going to target?" A discussion took place, and the conclusion was unanimous—the youth. A number of other questions came up, such as What about High School students who are learning the language? How can we get them to be interested in the language? How can we help them learn the language without making it too difficult for them to grasp?

One of the Elders told me that our way of teaching and learning the language has always been to have fun. Language learning does not become difficult as long as the people learning are having fun. Therefore, creating fun resource materials for the youth would be part of the challenge.

The Challenge: Hockey

Most Aboriginal communities have arenas, and most children play hockey. Some play for house league teams, and some even go on to play for professional teams. For example, on Manitoulin Island, there is a team called the Manitoulin Panthers, for which some of the fluent speakers' nephews play. There are also teams such as pee-wees, bantams, and so forth.

Some of these children will be heading off to secondary school, and, now that there is going to be an Introduction to the Ojibway Language course offered, it was felt that this would be an ideal opportunity to offer a CD ROM at this level. The CD-ROM will focus on hockey and will be aimed at the youth primarily, but it will also be useful at the post secondary level. In fact, it could also help other groups who are learning the language.

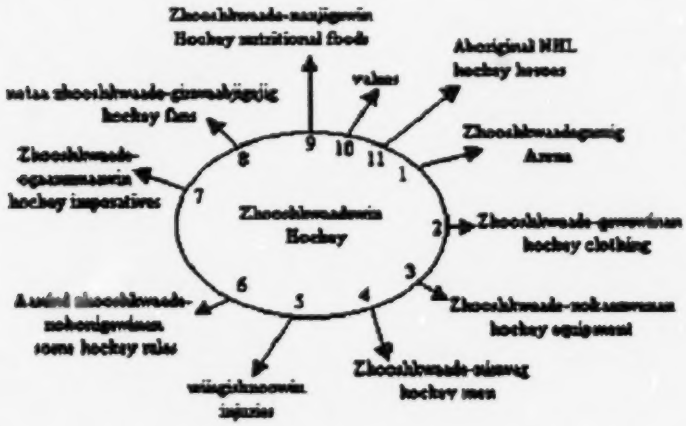
Youth need something that relates to them in order to learn, and hockey is important to many Ojibway youth. Perhaps they might end up using the language to communicate to each other while playing hockey. For example, they could use the language as a code in order to win, fooling the other teams by speaking their Ojibway language.

One Saturday night, I sat down to watch an NHL hockey game. This game was being televised on the Wawate network, where the hockey games are broadcast in the Ojibway language—northern dialect. One of the announcers translated into English for those who were watching the televised game. While watching, I recorded the hockey words and phrases. After compiling a number of these words and phrases over many games and seeing how much fun it had become, I began to document any language words that related to hockey. Each theme was taken and organized into a medicine wheel format.

The Medicine Wheel is a circle that has four sections or quadrants, such as the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. From this medicine wheel, the idea of nurturing the language and healing came to be. Even though some of the themes did not fall into the four categories, every attempt was made to accommodate them. The main focus was to revitalize what we have and had in teaching language and culture. Using this method, it was felt that we would be continuing to heal and nurture the language and culture. In this case, that healing was based on the theme of hockey.

There were 13 themes that were documented and organized into the four sections of the wheel. These included: the arena, hockey clothing, hockey equipment, hockey players, injuries, referees, hockey practice, hockey fans, nutritional foods, values, and, of course, Aboriginal hockey heroes (Figure 1). It was felt that the students who would be learning the language might get an incentive from the players, so it was very important to portray a hero because some of them may dream of some day becoming a hockey player. But, as you may know, there are not many Aboriginal hockey players in the NHL.

Figure 1. The Hockey Wheel



After completing the themes for the wheel, it was easy to spot more that could be done, and these became the sub-themes. Expansion began in the area of sub-themes in, for example, the theme of the arena. There are many different shapes and colours of arenas, and there are many contents within an arena.

After expanding the sub-themes, writing the scripts began. We wrote the scripts to match the themes and what might happen on the scene. We felt that it was important to relate things that actually happen in a typical hockey game so that the students would be able to relate to the hockey action and still be able to learn.

Some games have been suggested, and even some Ojibway challenges, in order for learners to test themselves. We are also considering incorporating reward points into the CD as a kind of learning incentive.

Speaking of the NHL, every year, as far as I can remember, there has been a Little NHL Hockey Tournament for the Aboriginal youth during March break. Oh! You know everyone leaves the Island to cheer on his or her sons, nephews, cousins, and so forth. In Wikwemikong alone, as the tradition goes, the residents

of the Wikwemikong Nursing Home are the keepers for the week because they are the only ones that stay behind to manage and look after the community during that week. This is how important hockey is and how well played, attended, and liked the sport is in this area. Although I knew most of the hockey words and phrases, as a hockey aunt, this project became more and more interesting to research for me.

Research Questionnaire

Prior to beginning the CD ROM project, a research questionnaire was developed in order to consult and receive feedback from local Aboriginal communities, interest groups, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary students, as well as other people in the surrounding area. It was very important to incorporate community input into the development stages of such an undertaking because this project would be linking the Nishinaabemowin language to modern technology. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: personal information, community information, and project information.

Rationale: Through the residential school system, generations of Aboriginal people were removed from their home communities and forced to abandon their language and culture. Our current curriculum is not based on Native curriculum; it is based on that of the dominant society.

Many Elders have said that we need to teach our language and culture and that the culture is not separate from the language—the two go hand in hand. The language encompasses all of our beliefs and customs. Therefore, it is important to teach our ways to our people so that they will know where they came from and where they are going in the future.

Community input: Communities must be included in curriculum development from the start. Both children and parents must be involved, and the education system must comply with the requests of the Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities need to control and review the curriculum being taught to their children.

Results: The results of the questionnaire were crucial because they were to have an influence on what would be incorporated in the production of the CD-ROM. Some of the questions were posed in order to get opinions on marketing and on the approaches that we would use to get the finished product into the hands of educators and students. I explored the comments from the questionnaire that were relevant to our project and implemented some of the ideas.

Reference Committee

Four Ojibway language experts were invited to sit on a committee that would oversee all aspects of the RNL project. This committee is referred to as the Reference Committee. The four who were chosen had the qualities and qualifications needed in such an undertaking: fully fluent, language teaching experience, linguistic training, knowledge of the new Orthography of the Double Vowel writing system, and proof reading experience.

New Words

Even after finding out the Ojibway names for most of the hockey related things, I am still doing research on some of the words for things that are relatively new, like jock strap. We did not have words for these things in the old language, so new words need to be added to our present vocabulary.

Language is a living thing that evolves with the times. Some new things are hard to describe, but although the words created for them can be very long, they sure get the idea across. We are now into the new Millennium, and although this has never been done before, it is urgent that speakers coin new technological words to describe such things as a Plexiglas or a time clock.

Script

As the CD-ROM was developing, scripts were added to the work. The first script we developed was based on the theme of the arena. We researched the appropriate animate and inanimate nouns and the appropriate verbs. We also felt it was important to include conjugated verbs in order to make use of the new words that were learned.

The first scene begins with two people wondering why there are so many cars in the arena parking lot. The first person wants to find out what is happening, and the second person says that there is hockey tournament. In order to distinguish the first person from the second person, an A is recorded to indicate the first person speaking and a B for the second speaker.

The scripts have been completed, and it is now time to confirm the ideas behind them. All of the information is going to be checked with fluent speaks from the community, including Aboriginal men, former hockey players, and referees. The time and place for this to be done is currently being planned.

Conclusion

I have completed all that needs to be done to this point, and as soon as the funding is received for the technician, one will be hired. The making of this CD-ROM is an opportunity to be creative and innovating. The finished product will provide students with something to do while learning the language. It will also provide an opportunity for teachers to make use of computer labs to further enhance their language teaching and give advanced students the opportunity for independent study. Adult learners and families will be able to learn in the comfort of their own home. The CD may even motivate students to learn the language or even the game of hockey. Pride will radiate when learners find out that this game originated in North America.

The CD-ROM will be compatible for both Mac and PC systems so that every opportunity is made available for people to work on an Ojibway CD-ROM.

Note

DIAND and the Ministry of Training and Colleges have funded the project.